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**WHERE HAVE ALL OUR CAPTAINS GONE?  
AN ANALYSIS OF WHY JUNIOR ARMY OFFICERS ARE LEAVING  
THE SERVICE**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## ABSTRACT

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The number of Captains leaving the Army after their initial commitment is higher than ever and has grown to the point that the future of the Army may be at risk. These young officers represent the core leadership foundation the Army will carry into the next century. The Army, as an institution, cannot afford to lose our future to the civilian sector at this critical juncture in history.

A large number of factors are contributing to our inability to keep our young officers in the Army. They range from lower benefits and pay to greater family separation and excellent job market opportunities. They are asked to move more often than ever before and they live in substandard housing.

The Army needs to pay our Captains what they are worth, return to the pre-1980 retirement system, and increase the basic allowance for housing. Further, the service obligation for West Point and full scholarship ROTC cadets should be increased to seven years, permanent change of station tour lengths increased to at least three years, and regional home stationing allowed.



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## **WHERE HAVE ALL OUR CAPTAINS GONE?**

### **An Analysis of Why Junior Army Officers Are Leaving the Service.**

The number of Captains leaving the Army after their initial commitment is higher than ever and has grown to the point that the future of the Army may be at risk. These young officers represent the core leadership foundation the Army will carry into the next century. They are the intellectual basis that we must pin our hopes on as the high-tech Army-After-Next looms on the horizon. The Army, as an institution, cannot afford to lose our future to the civilian sector at this critical juncture in history.

### **BACKGROUND**

Attrition and retention have long been areas of concern for the Army. Since the end of the draft and the institution of the all-volunteer force, we have faced the yearly challenge of ensuring the right number of soldiers and officers remain in the force.

This study focuses on the junior Captain portion of the overall officer population. Although retention of all ranks is important, the focus is deliberately on this segment primarily because this group of officers form the foundation of our future.

Today's junior Captain represents that portion of our Army that will significantly effect us in the future. These officers joined the Army between 1992-1996 and represent the generation of battalion commanders who will take command between 2010 and 2015. They are the future battalion and brigade commanders who will train the Army-After-Next.

These cohort year groups are historically significant because they are expected to lead our Army in an era that is predicted to be radically different from the Army we know today. This group of officers is expected to implement the Army-After-Next at the grass root, battalion level.

#### WHERE THEY COME FROM

The junior Captain manning the force today not only carries the burden of the future like all that came before, but does so carrying some additional weight.

This segment of our population is commonly called "Generation X". They were born between 1965 and 1983 and are significantly different from the previous "Baby Boomer" generation. They demand independence and they distrust institutions yet they are as driven as any generation.<sup>1</sup> They are characterized as the "me first", slacker generation yet they are intently focused and unafraid of both technology and change.<sup>2</sup>

Generation X brings to the military an entirely new outlook that must be understood and dealt with by our senior leaders.

Cohort year groups '92-'96 began their military training between 1988 and 1992 in the midst of one of the most devastating officer reductions the Army has ever experienced. While Cadets at the Military Academy or in ROTC programs, their first introduction to the Army was, for the most part, negative. In their most formidable years they heard and saw first hand the worst that could possible happen to our officer corps.

Many witnessed their ROTC instructor or West Point Tactical Officer receiving a "pink slip" from the Army. The military figure that they most admired in many cases was asked to leave after 10-12 years of dedicated service. This left a lasting impression particularly when it came time to make career decisions. It left many of these officers asking why would anyone waste ten years of their life and would the Army really provide the stable career environment they were looking for?<sup>3</sup> For too many the answer has been no.

At the same time these cohort year groups experienced the drawdown, the rules changed regarding their benefits. Retirement benefits were reduced for the second time before most graduated from college and they began to see a steady cut in medical and dental programs. Annual pay raises during this period did not keep pace with inflation and in fact lagged far

behind their civilian counterparts.<sup>4</sup> This contributed substantially to the negative attitude widely held by a large number of junior Captains.

The changes in the Officer Efficiency Report (OER) and the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) also had a direct impact on the career choices of the cohort '92-'96 officer. They are the segment of the officer corps that will test the first new OER in nearly twenty years. They are also the group that will determine if OPMS XXI will work. Both new systems, although well intended, have a second order effect on the mind of the junior officer. Both new programs add future uncertainty to a personnel management system that is often viewed with a good deal of skepticism. OPMS XXI and the new OER represent much needed improvements but at the same time add to the anxiety of the junior Captain.

It is not surprising why many junior officers have decided to leave the service. The cards seem stacked against them from the beginning both in terms of changes in potential career advancement and because their earliest years with the military were marked with turmoil. When we take into account the attitude our young officer brings into the military and add to that the environment that influenced this group during their early military service, the outcome is not surprising. More are leaving and our future is potentially at risk.

## WHAT THE STATISTICS SAY

Recently released figures indicate Captains are leaving the service now at only slightly more than the pre-drawdown rates of fiscal years 1987 and 1988. A study conducted in September 1998 by the Officer of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCS PER) concluded that Captain loss rates in FY 96-98 were only slightly higher (9%) than the pre-drawdown rate (8%).<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 below shows the results of that study.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to

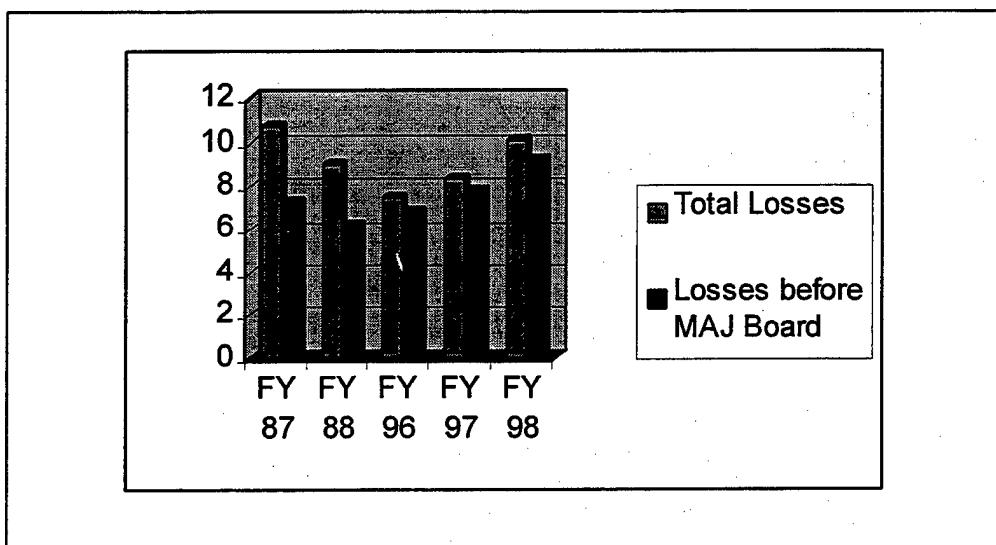
ACC	FY87	FY88	FY96	FY97	FY98
COL	16.8%	16.1%	14.5%	16.3%	17.9%
LTC	11.6%	11.0%	9.7%	11.1%	12.5%
MAJ	4.4%	4.5%	4.2%	4.3%	3.4%
CPT	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>
1LT	12.0%	13.6%	5.9%	6.5%	6.3%
2LT	1.6%	1.3%	2.1%	1.8%	1.9%
TOTAL	9.0%	8.6%	6.4%	7.1%	7.7%
2LT-COL					

Figure 1

note that the study did not highlight the fact Captains are getting out at increasing rates. Instead, it simply showed that Captain attrition was now back to the 1987 level.

As late as September of 1998 the Army was not concerned by the trend that clearly showed an increase in attrition over the previous three years. By January 1999 however, this had changed. In an information paper published by DCS PER that month the Army now was concerned by the increase attrition of Captains. This additional analysis highlighted the fact that although current losses were comparable to pre-drawdown levels,

the number of Captains leaving prior to their Majors promotion board was steadily increasing.<sup>7</sup> Figure 2 shows the results of that analysis.<sup>8</sup> Although DCSPER now acknowledged a concern, their analysis and solutions were incomplete. The analysis did not show why the junior officer was leaving and if the primary reasons indicated a pattern. The Army, based on this analysis



proposed three solutions; first, lower the pin-on point to First Lieutenant, second, implement anticipated compensation and retirement initiatives, and third, wait for force structure initiatives to take effect.<sup>9</sup>

#### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

Given this background, the intent now is to first look at what caused the current shortage, second to explore the detailed reasons why Captains are getting out to establish any trends, and finally make several recommendations.

## WHY ARE WE SHORT CAPTAINS?

The Captain shortage we are experiencing today in part stems from two phenomena. First, the Army under accessed lieutenants in fiscal years 1992 and 1993. That is, we failed to accurately predict the correct numbers we would need. Second, at the same time there was a pending shortage in future Captains, the Army allowed many lieutenants to leave prior to fulfilling their Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO). This decision was deliberate based primarily on the need to adapt quickly to shrinking budgets.

Predicting the future only seven years ago was a daunting task. With the drawdown fully underway and end strength figures for the force in constant flux, no one could accurately guess how many Captains would be needed when the dust finally settled. Not knowing the future, except for the fact that the Army would be smaller, led to the decisions to bring fewer Lieutenants into the force.

Compounding the problem was a perceived future overage of Captains as the Army downsized. To alleviate that potential problem the Army allowed officers to leave before their service obligation date. Add to this the economic boom in the early part of this decade and the stage was set for the shortages we are experiencing now. The Army leadership, for good reasons at the time, made some decisions that ultimately caused shortages.

It was not known at the time what impact these two policies would be only a few short years later because the personnel system, by its nature, does not offer immediate feedback. It takes time for decisions to be felt and because we operate so close to the margin when it comes to maintaining the correct number of officers, a mistake of only 200-300 officers can cause lasting effects.<sup>10</sup>

It is hard to criticize the Army for mistakes made during a difficult time in our history. In the final analysis our senior leaders did the best they could with the information they had at the time decisions were made.

#### PERSONNEL POLICY AFFECTING RETENTION

Recent shortages do however bring up sometimes controversial personnel policies particularly concerning our long standing practice of "up or out" and the current Active Duty Service Obligation length.

The "up or out" policy, that is the notion that an officer must be eligible for promotion to stay in the Army, in an environment that is so competitive is now, more than ever, impacting our ability to maintain a quality junior grade officer.<sup>11</sup> In the civilian sector a computer programmer is allowed to do that job until retirement without penalty. In the Army if you are a competent Captain or Major but not selected

for promotion you are forced to leave. This is a tremendous waste of training and talent that we can no longer afford to simply cast off especially with regard to technical skills required in the new information age.

The Army recognized that not every officer would grow up to be the next Chief of Staff and that vital talent was leaving the service. This recognition, in part, was the reason the Officer Personnel Management System XXI was developed. The officer who may not be competitive in a combat arms branch (armor, infantry, artillery) could choose a different career path competing against a different set of officers. In this way the Army would help mitigate self-imposed attrition.<sup>12</sup> The cast-off becomes the productive resource.

The current Active Duty Service Obligation length is another policy contributing to shortages. A four or five year commitment to serve in the Army may no longer be sufficient given the cost of a West Point or ROTC education. Cost data compiled by West Point and shown below in figure 3, highlights the high cost of educating and training a Lieutenant today.<sup>13</sup> That cost now seems out of proportion to the benefit received by the Army in terms of length of service. Representative Howard Coble (R-NC), the sponsor a House bill to increase service obligation for academy graduates to eight years, says the extra three years of service are necessary for academy graduates to

fully repay their education, which is valued between \$215,000 and \$270,00.<sup>14</sup> While Congressman Coble's figures are higher than West Point's, the important point is there is a growing belief that education expense and service obligation are not balanced.

	Expense/ Student/Year	Expense/ Degree	Expense/Commissioned Lieutenant
<b>Cadet Command</b>			
Claremont McKenna College	\$19,844.00	\$81,956.00	\$154,90
College of William and Mary	\$10,082.00	\$41,639.00	\$114,58
Cornell	\$21,693.00	\$89,592.00	\$162,54
Davidson College	\$19,743.00	\$81,539.00	\$154,48
Duke	\$31,287.00	\$129,215.00	\$202,16
Georgetown	\$20,911.00	\$86,362.00	\$159,31
Johns Hopkins	\$61,715.00	\$254,883.00	\$327,83
MIT	\$37,372.00	\$154,346.00	\$227,29
Princeton	\$32,417.00	\$133,882.00	\$206,83
Notre Dame	\$15,873.00	\$65,555.00	\$138,50
University of Pennsylvania	\$26,605.00	\$109,879.00	\$182,82
University of Virginia	\$14,131.00	\$58,361.00	\$131,31
Wake Forest	\$49,036.00	\$202,519.00	\$275,46
USMA	\$39,056.00	\$154,275.00	\$201,33

Figure 3

The short service obligation invites the West Point or ROTC cadet to use a subsidized education to further real career intentions. These intentions often are not likely to include 20 or 30 years of service to our country as a commissioned officer.

Scholarships have become a stepping stone to a life's work on Wall Street or in business. A recent study by the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis shows the percentage of West Point cadets that finish 6 years of service at just under 60%

which is down from nearly 80% during the Reagan years of buildup (figure 4).<sup>15</sup> Supporting the contention that service obligation

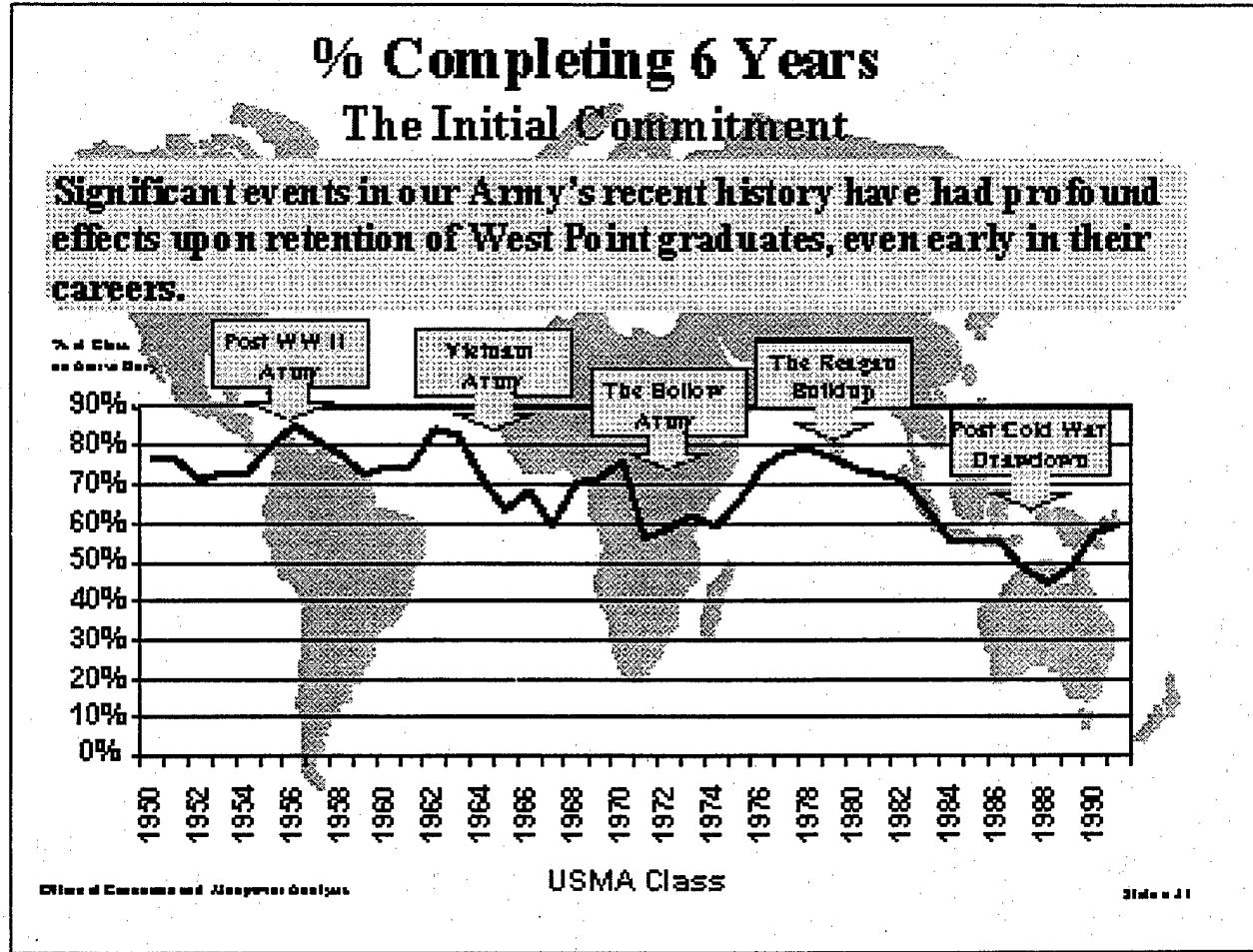


Figure 4

is not foremost in the minds of many junior officers. Figure 5 below shows that only 42% of all company grade officers recently surveyed intend to make the Army a career. Of most concern however is only 29% of our junior officers plan to stay beyond their current obligation and another 29% plan to leave after their current obligation.<sup>16</sup> These attitudes are largely driven

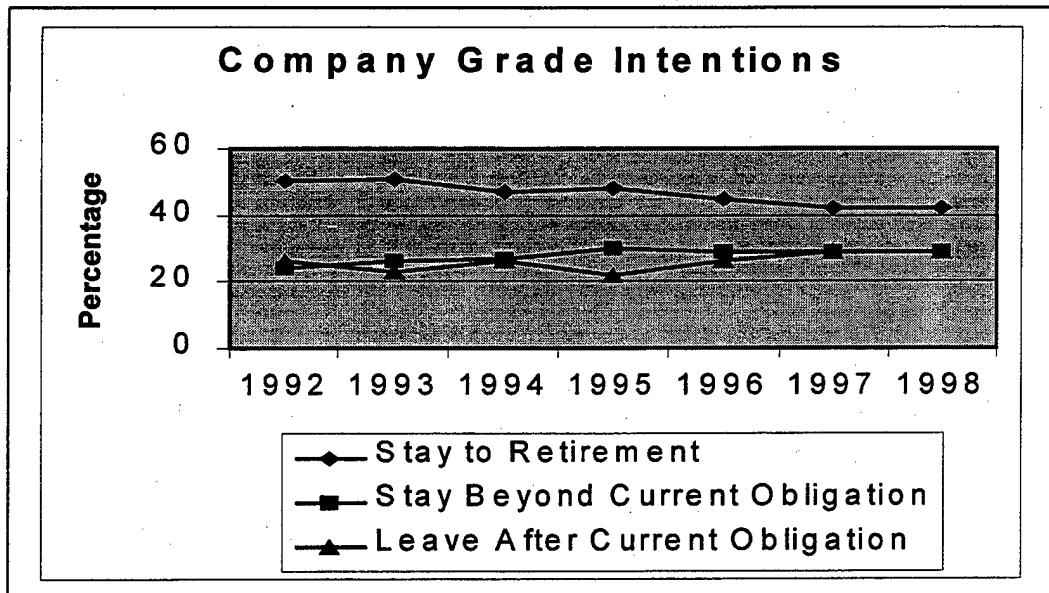


Figure 5

by other factors discussed later but are influenced by the relatively short service obligation currently imposed.

#### THE COMPENSATION FACTORS

Pure personnel policies do not however tell the whole story. Compounding the accession and early out problems of the past is the longer lasting issue of why so many young officers want to get out as they reach the end of their initial service obligation. Two broad categories emerged from recent studies by the Army Research Institute and the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis. The first category is relative compensation, which includes; Captain's base pay, military housing, and the retirement systems. The second category concerns the current attitudes about the utility of serving in the military, these

include; permanent change of station moves, unaccompanied tours, family time, and the impact of the strong economy.

#### PAY AND BENEFITS

Base pay for the Captain has followed a declining trend since the end of the Vietnam War. In fact since 1986 base pay has lost, in terms of real income, nearly \$19 per year (see figure 6).<sup>17</sup> Base pay has declined not only in terms of real dollars but in terms of related civilian education as well. Captain's pay in the mid-1980s was comparable to a civilian's

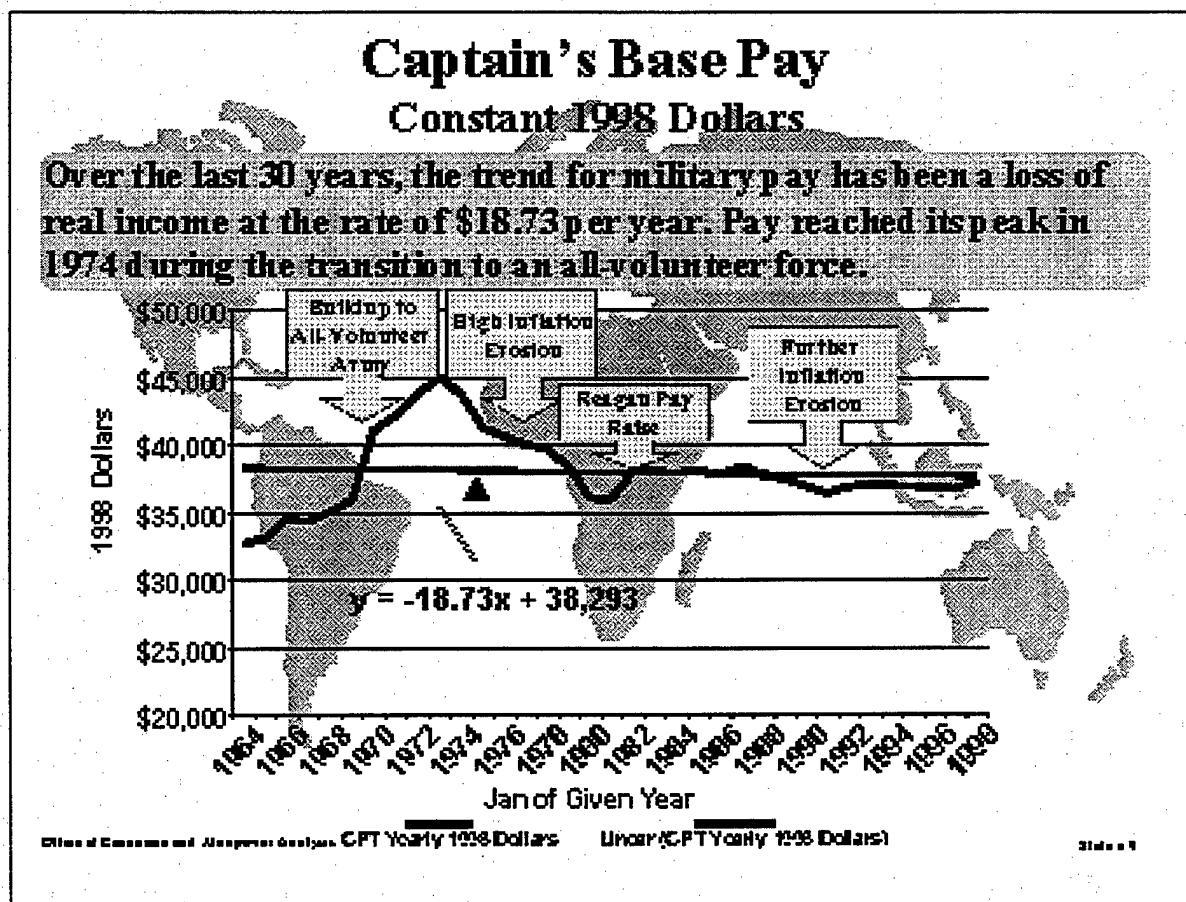
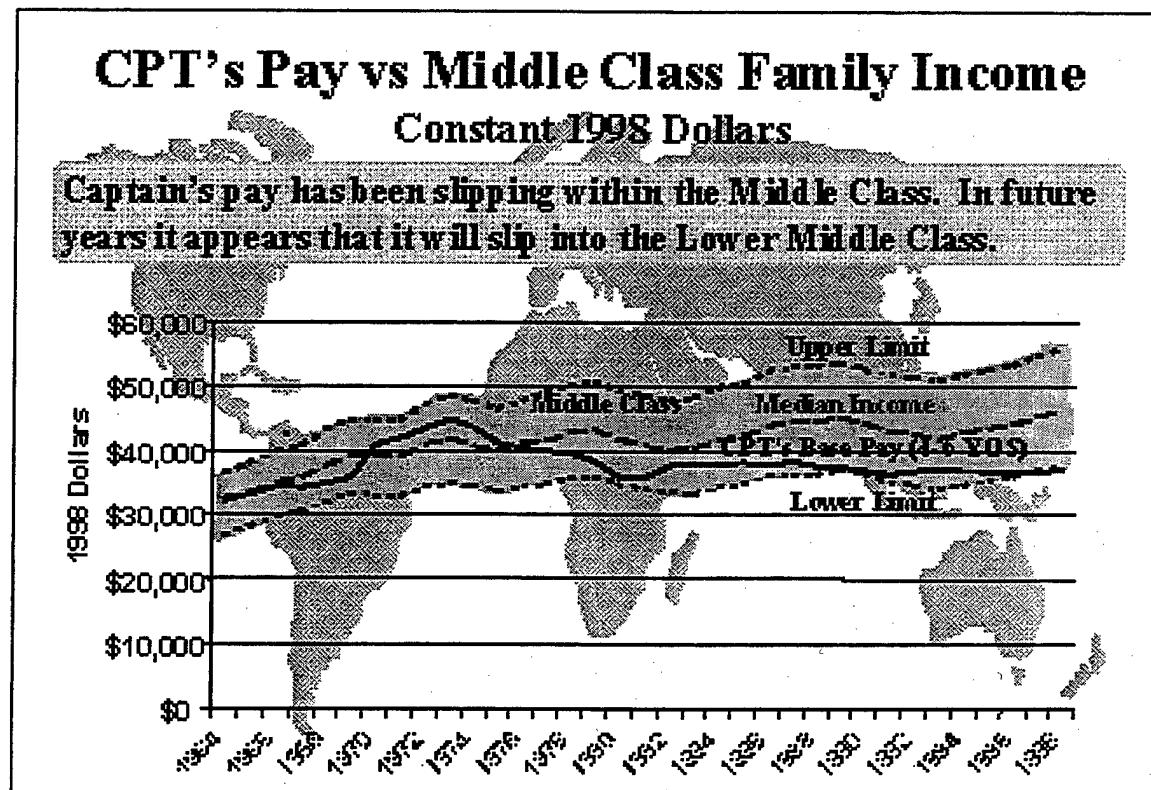


Figure 6

pay with a technical engineering degree. That however is no longer the case. Over the past fifteen year's the base salary of our Captain has grown closer to the average American income than to the salary commanded by an engineer with a bachelor of



science degree.<sup>18</sup> The net effect of the decline in pay over time and the relative strength of that pay is our officer now find's himself on the lower edge of the middle class (figure 7).<sup>19</sup> Where once he lived near the upper limit of the middle class; the junior officer today has the spending power nearly equivalent to the lower middle class of our country.

Clearly the base pay of the Captain is below that of his civilian equivalent. Few would argue that we ask much more of our junior officer than our civilian counterparts ask of their junior employees. In addition to occasionally risking his life, our officer works 50-60+ hour weeks, is frequently on call 24 hours a day, and has much more responsibility than most junior managers. It is not unusual to find the typical Army officer at his desk during a portion of his weekend. To not properly compensate for this demanding job simply means that the Army will not be able to keep our future in uniform.

Basic monetary compensation is the single most significant cause of the great exodus of Captains. In the spring 1998 Sample Survey of Military Personnel, basic pay was the number one reason for leaving the Army.<sup>20</sup> The Army must elevate the junior officer back into middle-class status.

#### MILITARY HOUSING

Military housing plays an ever-increasing role in the decision to leave the service. Over the past two decades the average size of a civilian home has risen from 1375 sq.-ft to 2120 sq.-ft while military housing size has remained constant. The Captain today lives in a house that is comparable in size to the average civilian house in 1970. Put a different way, the

average size civilian house of 1996 is the military house the general officer is living in today.<sup>21</sup>

Housing, as part of the overall standard of living and quality of life issues, plays an important part in shaping the attitudes of our junior officers. In the most recent survey of the officer population, the Army Research Institute found the trend toward increasing dissatisfaction with both the Army standard of living and quality of life. This trend is consistent over at least the past eight years. Figure 8 shows

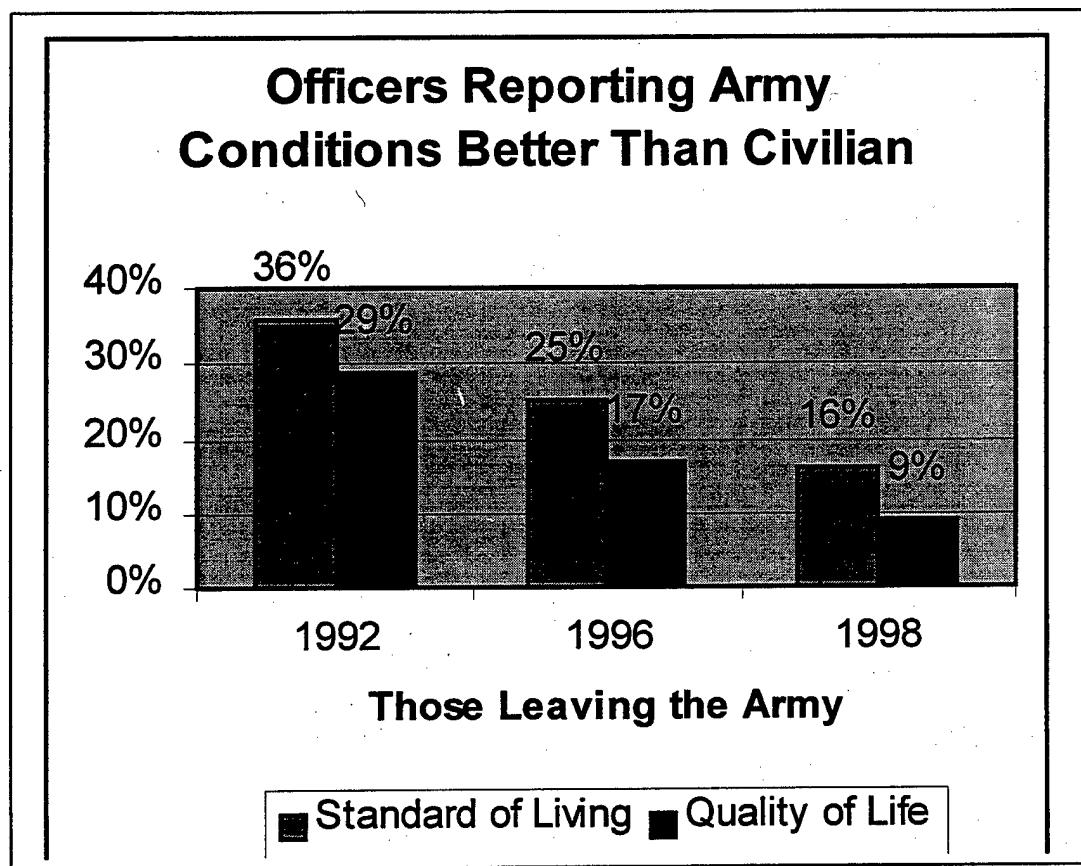


Figure 8

that of the officers who are leaving the service today, only 16% believe the standard of living provided by the Army is better than in the civilian world and only 9% believe the Army quality of life is better.<sup>22</sup>

Military housing has not kept up with modern demand. In our society today the demand is for larger housing that has many more amenities than ever before. Like the automobile where cruise control used to be an option and is now standard, housing "perks" like square footage and two-car garages are now standard equipment. In many instances on-post housing has not been renovated, enlarged, or improved since the Vietnam era. It used to be that living on-post meant you lived in a style and under conditions better than your in the civilian community. Now it means accepting quarters that are below the minimum standard accepted by middle-class society.

#### RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Since 1980 the officer retirement system has changed twice. First to a system called High Three then to the current system called "REDUX".<sup>23</sup> Figure 9 is a graphic depiction of the differences in the three retirement systems. The "REDUX" system clearly falls well behind the previous two especially in terms of total retirement pay per year. Regardless of how long the officer is retired, the "REDUX" retirement plan consistently

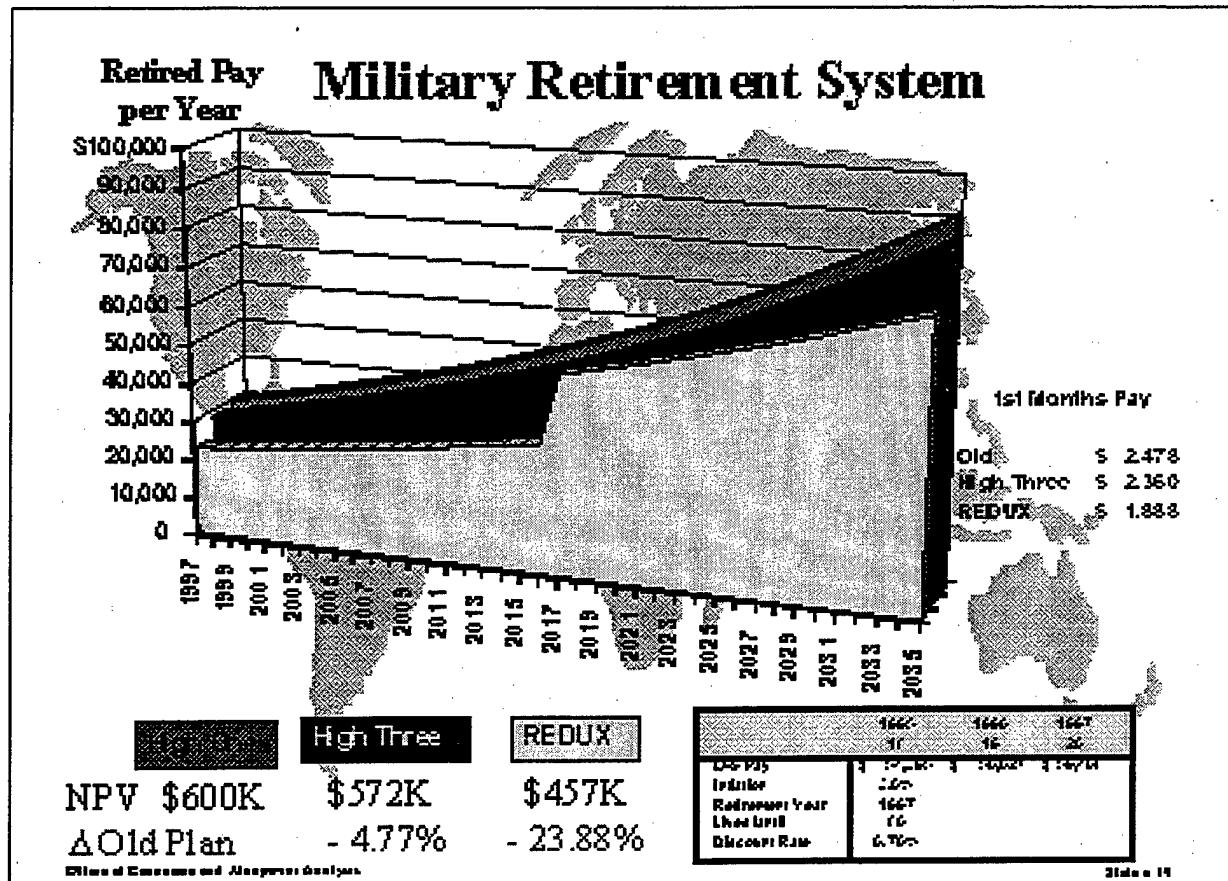


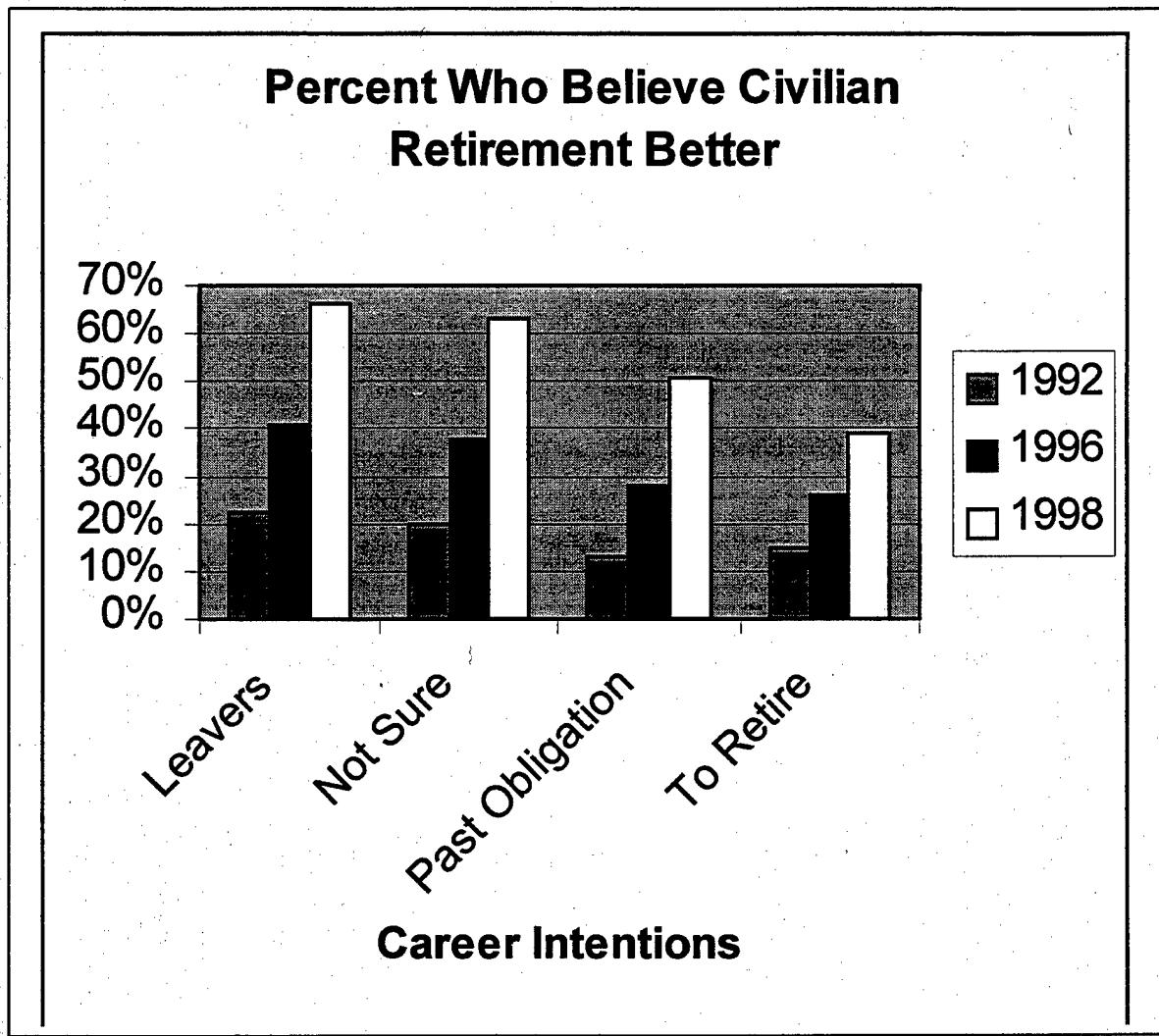
Figure 9

allows substantially less yearly pay than the other two systems.

When the first officers retire under the "REDUX" plan in 2011, the net present value of their plan will be 24% less than officers who retire under the High One plan.<sup>24</sup>

Military retirement benefits and particularly retirement pay have long been the envy of the world. Receiving one-half of your base pay for life after 20 years of dedicated service was a major drawing card for many of us still in uniform. Two consecutive changes in the retirement plan over the past 18 years have left an indelible mark on our officer corps. The question concerning retirement benefits on the most recent

survey showed a significant change in attitude. Many more officers, as shown in figure 10, now believe civilian retirement benefits are better than the Army's. Regardless of career



aspirations, the negative attitude toward the "REDUX" retirement plan is significant and growing.<sup>25</sup> The retirement issue alone is now one of the top three reasons young officers are leaving the service.<sup>26</sup>

## THE ARMY ENVIRONMENT

The second major aspect effecting retention is the current military work environment itself. People make choices based on their overall level of happiness or satisfaction and over the last decade, the satisfaction and thus desire to serve in the military has declined. Several factors contribute to this decline.

### FREQUENT MOVES

The trend toward more frequent permanent change of station (PCS) moves leads the list of factors most effecting desire to serve. While a Lieutenant in his first assignment can expect to

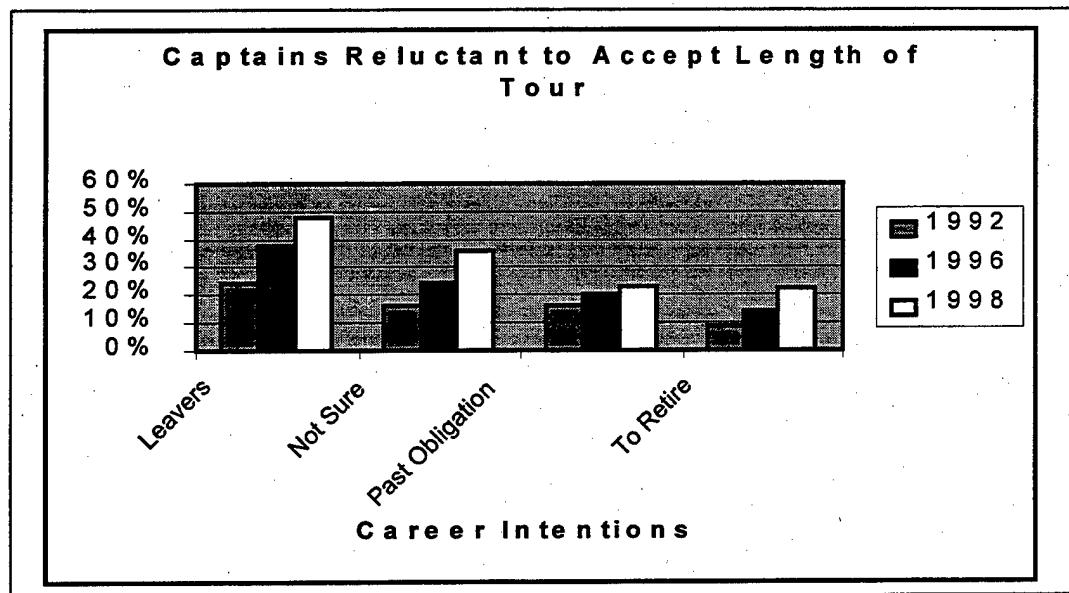


Figure 11

remain stable for up to three years, all other officers are moving, on average, every two years.<sup>27</sup> From the most recent

survey, 48% of all junior officers indicated they were unwilling to accept this increased moving burden. This percentage is up significantly from the previous two surveys (figure 11).<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the same survey found that more officers are willing to accept the overall number of PCS moves expected in a career.<sup>29</sup> The problem is not moving but how often.

The fact that we move more frequently than ever before has a larger impact on retention. This is especially true for the Captain who is likely married to a professional.<sup>30</sup> Gone are the officers who could not wait for the next PCS move because it meant a new challenge in an exciting place like Germany or Colorado. Gone are the four-year tours facing the Warsaw Pact in West Germany. Today the PCS move means being uprooted and sent to Korea or Turkey probably without your family and probably for more than one year. Even if you move today to a place like Germany, the chances of ending up in a peacekeeping mission like Bosnia are very high. This is not an incentive but a stark reality that does not sell very well to the Captain leaning toward civilian life.

#### TIME AWAY FROM THE FAMILY

Unaccompanied tours are another aspect that has significantly impacted attitudes. Results from a recent study show that 75% of all Captains that intended to leave the service

were very reluctant to accept any number of unaccompanied tours (figure 12).<sup>31</sup> This is particularly alarming given the current

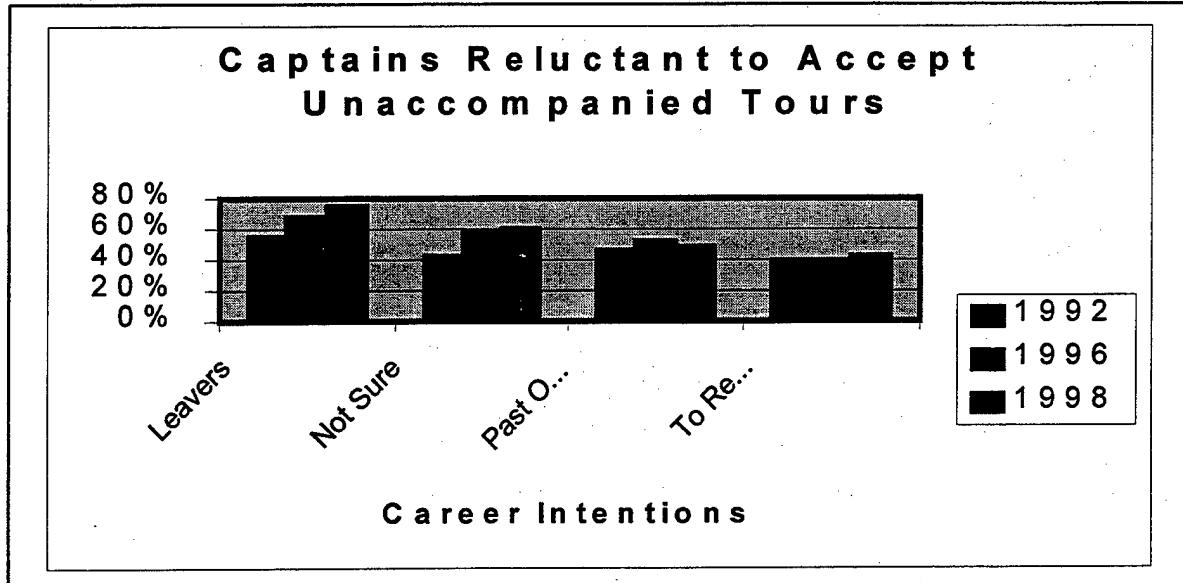


Figure 12

state of world affairs and the fact that most predictions see more small-scale contingency operations in the Army's future rather than fewer.<sup>32</sup>

During the last several years, Operating Tempo (OPTEMPO), Personnel Tempo (PERSTEMPO), and unit undermanning have led to longer hours and more frequent deployments.<sup>33</sup> This has a direct impact on family time that this generation of officer feels is important. An overwhelming majority the officers surveyed stated they were very reluctant to accept the frequency with which family plans would be disrupted by Army requirements. Further, that same majority was reluctant to accept the number of weeks per year one would typically spend away from home.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 13 shows those survey results. PERSTEMPO and OPTEMPO are significant factors contributing to the decision to leave the Army.

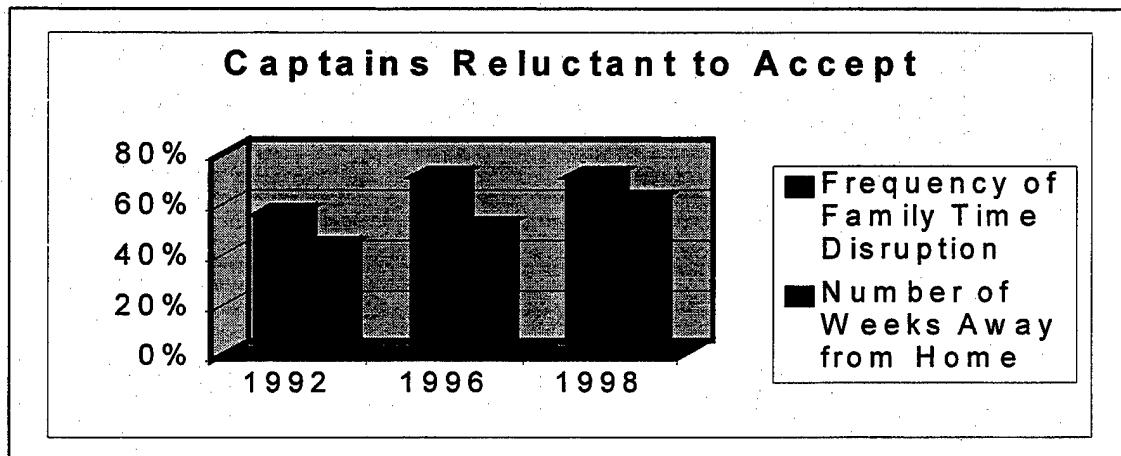


Figure 13

#### THE IMPACT FROM THE ECONOMY

While military pay and compensation and certain work environment factors affect our ability to retain top quality Captains one cannot ignore the U.S. economy. "Not since the early 1960's has the U.S. economy had such low inflation and low unemployment. It is the best economy in 30 years."<sup>35</sup> Since the early 1990's the feeling among young officers concerning the ease of finding a good civilian job has remarkably increased. The 1998 survey by ARI (figure 14 below) points out clearly that the vast majority of Captains, regardless of their Army career intentions, think they can easily find work outside the Army.<sup>36</sup> The economy is such that job security offered by the military is no longer a major deterrent to leaving the service.

## Captains Reporting Easy to Find a Good Civilian Job

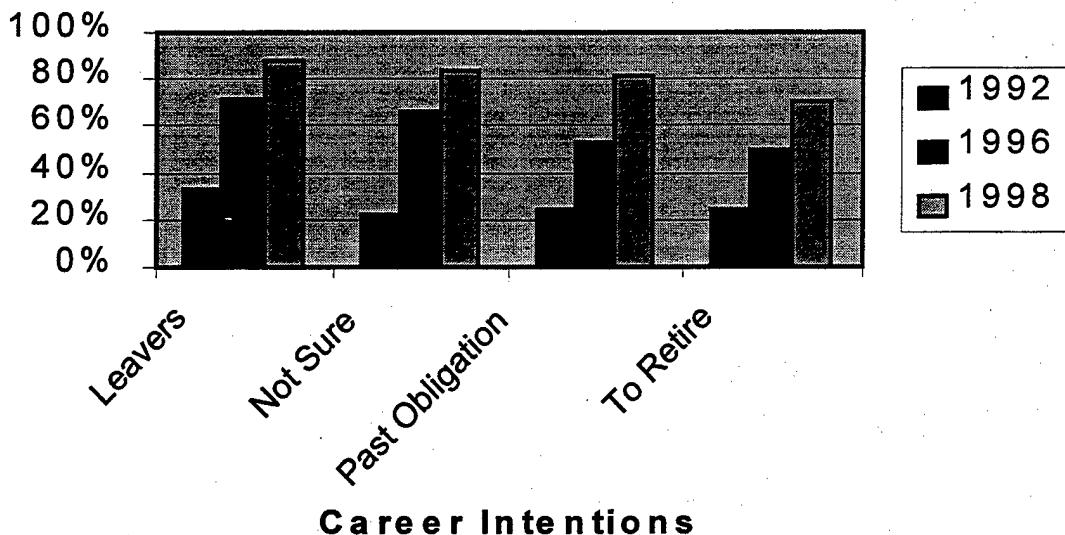


Figure 14

The difficulty that our young officers find leaving the service was likewise born out by a recently updated ARI survey database.<sup>37</sup> The findings show that a good economy is a two-edged sword for the military. Not only are the Captains confident of their ability to get the good civilian job but that drives down their reluctance to leave the Army. Figure 15 shows the survey results of asking Captains how difficult it would be to leave the Army in the next year or so, given your own personal or family situation.<sup>38</sup> The trend over the past seven years is clearly growing making it increasingly very difficult to retain our future.

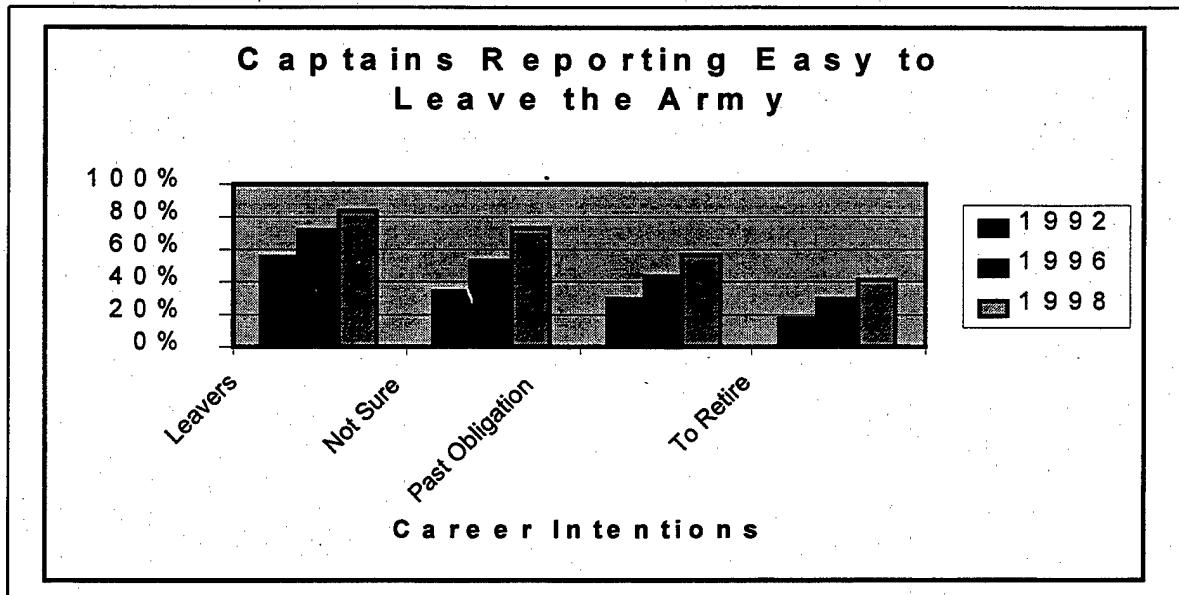


Figure 15

#### SUMMARY

A large number of factors are contributing to our inability to keep our young officers in the Army. They range from lower benefits and pay to greater family separation and excellent job market opportunities. "The junior officers are slipping into the lower middle class, while the standard of living for contemporary peers is rising."<sup>39</sup> They are asked to move more often than ever before and they live in substandard housing. The question now is what should we do?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

In the overall analysis it appears that retaining quality Captains and ensuring we can do so in the future will require some changes. This issue is clearly not simply a matter of

Generation X attitude differences, but based on real facts that cannot be dismissed.

#### PERSONNEL POLICY

It is time to look seriously at some of our personnel policies and bring them in line with modern reality. The Army does not enjoy the same popularity with the X Generation as it did with previous groups. This in part has caused recruiting and retention problems that our personnel system has yet to adjust. Several time-honored policies require modification to meet the demands of the next century and to compete with our civilian brethren.

It is time to look seriously at extending the obligation for West Point and full scholarship ROTC Cadets. From a pure cost versus benefit standpoint (no discount factors, present or future values included) of a West Point education, as an example, the service obligation should be extended to seven years. Figure 16 shows this relationship graphically. The cost to the Army of producing an officer through West Point is approximately \$201,000.<sup>40</sup> If you count the base salary of that officer as the yearly benefit to the Army, it takes about seven years for the costs to equal the benefits. We should at least expect an equal payback for our investment.

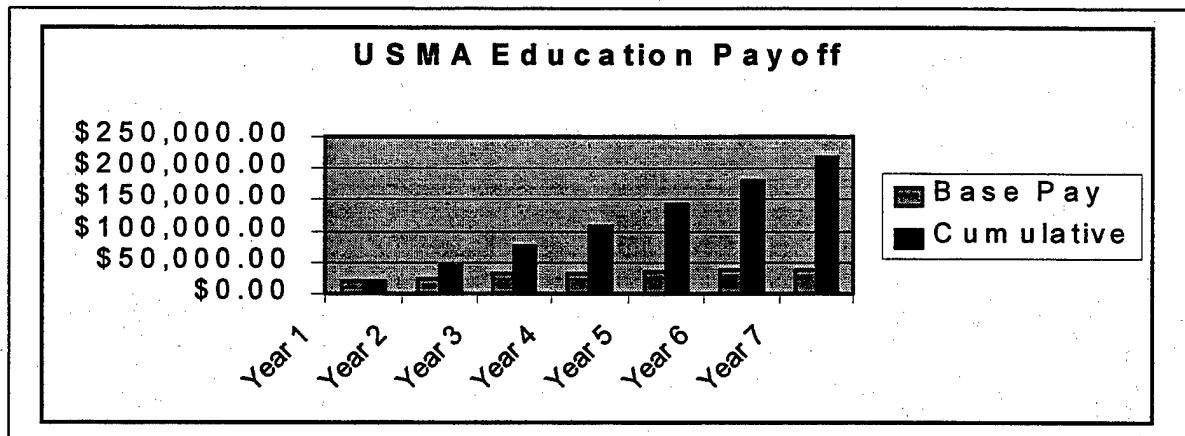


Figure 16

The notion of "up or out" has outlived its usefulness. Why is it unacceptable for a Captain who has been passed over for promotion to remain in the service? The answer is that in these times of increased competition with the civilian world it is all right to selectively continue Captains on active duty. Here is a person who likes the Army and wants to be in the Army but missed the promotion cut by perhaps only a few people. To separate him from the Army is not cost effective simply because of the time and treasury expended to train and maintains that officer. We need to look very closely at whom we separate so that quality people are retained and the burden on the system is at least partially mitigated. After all the Army pay chart extends to 26 years for a Captain for a reason. Why not selectively continue Captains and offer a fifteen-year retirement package? OPMS XXI addresses this problem as mentioned before by allowing officers to select specific career

paths where they feel most competitive. This combined with selected continuance and an early retirement plan should help.

#### PAY, HOUSING, AND RETIREMENT

In order to expect to compete with the civilian sector we must pay our officers what they are worth. Without a reasonable compensation package we cannot expect our younger officer to stay in the Army. As mentioned before this is the most important aspect of the retention problem and the one that must be addressed first.

Base pay must be increased to a level that guarantees our officer corps maintains an income comparable to civilians with similar education. This equates to about \$8000 per year as shown in figure 17.<sup>41</sup> That means a lump sum of \$152M just to

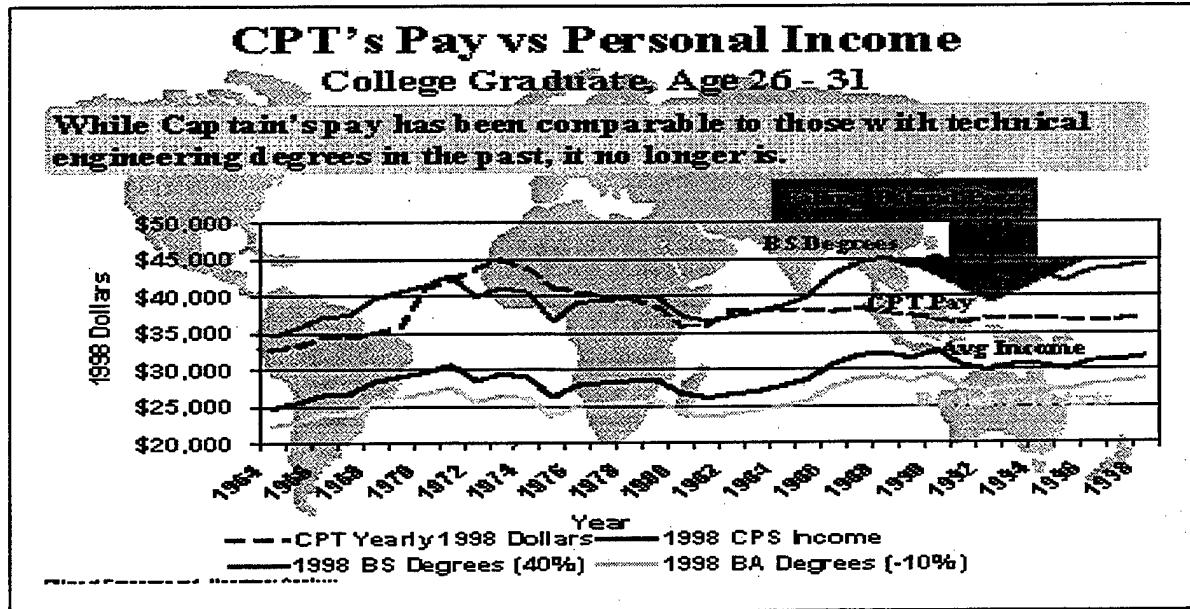


Figure 17

bring all of the Army's Captains base pay in line with their civilian counterparts, but well worth the investment in our future. A similar raise across the officer corps would cost about \$450M annually.<sup>42</sup>

In fact steps are already underway to address the pay problem. In early January 1999, Senator John Warner of Virginia proposed legislation that would raise pay effective January 2000 by at least 4.8% and perhaps as much as 10.3%.<sup>43</sup> If the higher end is realized for three consecutive years, then the pay issue may be solved.

The decision needs to be made on what to do about on-post housing. This is an issue that has been neglected for so long that fixing the problem by upgrading or increasing military housing is too costly to contemplate. The issue is comparable housing not on-post housing. Except for a small percentage of the military workforce (key and essential personnel), we no longer need to house officers on post. Paying our soldiers an appropriate housing allowance that allows them to buy or rent the same type of house their civilian counterpart lives in is probably sufficient. The exact amount of compensation is debatable but a first attempt might raise the basic allowance for housing for a Captain to that of a Lieutenant Colonel or about \$238 per Captain (37% increase). If every Captain in the Army lived off post that amounts to \$4.5M annually, a small fee

but again one worth instituting and one that gets right to the heart of the problems we face. To raise all officer housing allowances a similar percentage would cost about \$370M annually.<sup>44</sup>

Change the retirement system for all officers back to the original pre-1980 "High One" system. This system worked, was a tremendous incentive to stay in the Army, and was an effective recruiting tool. Senator Warner's legislation calls for a return to the original High-One retirement system with an option to take an immediate \$30,000 bonus and continue with "REDUX".<sup>45</sup>

#### PERMANENT CHANGE OF STATION MOVES

The trend toward more frequent moves must be reversed. We must account for the fact that more officers are married to professional spouses, which makes frequent moving difficult. Regional stationing is an idea whose time has come. Rather than move an officer every two years all over the globe, allow that same officer to home station in the region of his choice. By repeatedly assigning an officer back to his home region after overseas tours, we better account for the dual income family, help the officer build equity in his home, and foster some form of stability.

Opening up voluntary assignments is another method of stabilizing the officer corps. By allowing individual

volunteers to accept assignments, many moves could potentially be eliminated. The second and third order effects of such policy are not enumerated here but rather the point is that something positive needs to be done to reverse this trend.

#### TIME AWAY FROM FAMILY

Unaccompanied tours is an issue that is perhaps the most difficult. There will probably always be a significant number of overseas unaccompanied tours. The Army as an institution cannot completely influence the decision to station soldiers in harms way, but we can make that stationing more palatable.

There are many service members who would like nothing better than to spend a twenty-year career in Korea. The solution is obvious, let them. Of those needed that are not so inclined, make the follow on assignment attractive or allow for home stationing, graduate school, or some other incentive. Overseas pay incentives and income tax relief are other ideas that could help.

Another answer to unaccompanied tours is to make them fair across the board and therefore predictable. Every officer should know and understand that one unaccompanied tour will be required in the first eight years of his career. That knowledge, for this generation of officer, is needed and appreciated. This may sound trivial but again something needs to be done to address

this issue which is high on the list of topics driving the young officer out of the Army.

Operating and personnel tempo are other areas that need attention but are difficult to reduce because the Army does not always control our destiny. Predictability is the best way to deal with this. Bosnia is a good example of the Army predicting for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Divisions their rotations into the Balkans.<sup>46</sup> More or this is needed throughout the Army and especially at Battalion level. If the training schedule says 150 field training days per year then that should be enforced and the soldiers, including Captains will respond favorably.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The counter argument against implementing change will undoubtedly come and inevitably be made for the same historical reasons; first, we cannot fiscally afford to implement change and second we cannot afford to lower the institution's standards. The right answer however is that we must change our ways of doing business when it comes to retaining our future leaders. The alternative is a hollow leadership nucleus that is ill prepared to fight the battles of the next century.

We must in the end adapt to the changing economic environment by offering our soldiers better opportunities than the perspective civilian employer. We must look at this

challenge as not giving in to a generation of non-patriotic officers but as an azimuth change to reflect reality. If we are to retain the experience needed in the next millenium, we must pay for it now.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Bryant Jordan, "Generation X," Air Force Times, 14 July 1997, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Blazar and Gidget Fuentes, "Cover Story," Navy Times, 5 May 1997, 13.

<sup>3</sup> 1LT(P) Jeff Casucci of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 18<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, interview by author, 9 June 1998, Fort Sill, OK.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis, Where Have All The Captains Gone? (West Point, N.Y.: United States Military Academy, August 1998), 9,11.

<sup>5</sup> LTC Doug McAllaster, "Officer Retention," memorandum for senior Army leaders, Washington, D.C., 16 September 1998.

<sup>6</sup> CPT John L. Thurman, "Loss Rate Comparison," information paper for senior Army leaders, Washington, D.C., 16 September 1998.

<sup>7</sup> LTC Al Sweetser, "Army Competitive Category Captain loss rates," information paper for senior Army leaders, Washington, D.C., 14 January 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>10</sup> LTC Al Sweetser of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, interview by author, 22 January 1999, Washington, D.C.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> The material in this paragraph was taken from, "An Officer Corps for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, OPMS XXI", chain teaching slide packet.

<sup>13</sup> MAJ David N. Fralen, "Investment in a Commissioned Officer - USMA and ROTC," information paper for General Sullivan, West Point, NY, 23 April 1998

<sup>14</sup> Mary Boyle, "Service Academy Grads Could Face 8-year Hitch," The Patriot-News, 23 February 1999, sec. A, p.5.

<sup>15</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 31.

<sup>16</sup> June Jones, Attrition Among Active Component Army Captains. Alexandria, VA.: U.S. Army Research Institute, December 1998, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>20</sup> LTC Morris Peterson, "Tracking Reasons for Leaving the Army (Before Retirement) - Spring 1998," information paper for senior Army leaders, Washington, D.C., 20 October 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, ARI study, 23 and 28.

<sup>23</sup> REDUX is not an official Army acronym but a term used for the latest retirement plan enacted in 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, ARI study, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, ARI study, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Jones, ARI study, 38.

<sup>30</sup> June Jones of the Army Research Institute, interview by author, 21 January 1998, Washington, D.C.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, ARI study, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Department of Defense, Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review May 1997 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 11.

<sup>33</sup> OPTEMPO refers to the pace or frequency of Army unit operations while PERSTEMPO refers to the pace of personnel activity within those unit operations.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, ARI study, 33,34.

<sup>35</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Jones, ARI study, 40.

<sup>37</sup> The Army Research Institute began the Survey on Officer Careers (SOC) project in 1988 with the Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers (LROC) Survey. This survey was conducted again in 1989, 1990, 1992, 1996, and 1998. The data used in this paper was taken from the 14 December 1998 updated ARI database.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, ARI study, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Fralen, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis study, 11.

<sup>42</sup> The figures \$152M and \$450M were derived using strength data presented in a noontime lecture at the Army War College by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff Personnel, October 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Robinson robinsonj@awc.carlisle.army.mil, "Military Retirement & Pay Equity Act of 1999," Electronic mail message to Michael Clark clarkm@awc.carlisle.army.mil, 22 January 1999.

<sup>44</sup> The figures used in this section were derived from current Army pay and allowance tables and the strength figures as quoted in the October 1999 lecture.

<sup>45</sup> Robinson, 2.

<sup>46</sup> "1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division to provide Army presence in Bosnia," Army Public Affairs News Release, Army News Service, (21 April 1998): 1.

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